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The Helpers of the holy souls; who and what they are, with some ...

Charles Brierley
Garside



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*The profits of this publication will be devoted
entirely to the promotion of the work of the Helpers
of the Holy Souls in England.*

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THE
HELPERS OF THE HOLY SOULS.

Nihil obstat.

JOSEPH CANONICUS BANS, S.T.D.

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THE
HELPERS OF THE HOLY SOULS :

WHO AND WHAT THEY ARE.

With some Account of the Life of their Foundress.



BY THE

REV. CHARLES B. GARSIDE, M.A.

AUTHOR OF 'THE PROPHET OF CARMEL' AND 'DISCOURSES ON SOME PARABLES
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.'

'Do you know, O Christians, what will be our lot if we have no zeal for the souls in Purgatory? We shall one day be treated as we have treated others. God will permit us to be abandoned ourselves as we have abandoned them.'

BOURDALOUE.

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To His Grace the
Archbishop of Westminster,

who has ever shown a deep interest in
the Helpers of the Holy Souls,
and by his generous encouragement, fatherly counsels,
and zealous co-operation
has testified his earnest desire that they and their sacred cause
may long and abundantly flourish in England,
the following Pages are dedicated,
with grateful respect,
by the Author.

PREFACE.

FOR the details of the Life of the Foundress of the Helpers of the Holy Souls the author is indebted to a highly-interesting biography of her, entitled *Notice sur la Révérende Mère de la Providence*.

If the following pages contribute in any degree towards making the history of the Order of the Helpers of the Holy Souls more widely known in England, and its admirable objects more highly appreciated, the author's fervent wish will be accomplished.

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THE

HELPERS OF THE HOLY SOULS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

LET our readers picture before their mind's eye some Protestant, a stranger to London, and who happens to stop by mistake at 23 Queen Anne-street, near Cavendish-square. He knocks, and is surprised to find that the door rather mysteriously opens as if by its own accord. In stepping over the threshold he observes, through a window on the left-hand side of the entrance, a female form clad in black ; he perceives at once that he has strayed to the wrong house ; but as his curiosity has been set in motion, he makes a very natural inquiry.

‘ Who,’ he asks, ‘ are the occupiers of this house ?’

‘ The Helpers of the Holy Souls,’ is the prompt reply.

We can imagine—no, we really cannot imagine—his first sensations on receiving this answer. ‘ The Holy Souls !’ he would say to himself. ‘ Who are they ? What can they be ? And, moreover, their Helpers ?’ Each step in his attempted analysis of the separate words would only lead to increased perplexity. If our imaginary Protestant

asked no further questions, he would leave the spot marvelling more than ever at the strange things to be found in that bewildering Babylon called London.

If, on the other hand, he pursued his investigations for the sake of adding to his stock of singular facts, he would find himself unexpectedly starting a whole series of grave questions, whose roots strike deep into the sphere of religion. That unpretending door of 23 Queen Anne-street would in this case be like the mysterious portal of a whole world of faith, hope, charity, and religion, to him both new and startling. He might have had some idea more or less vague about the doctrine of Purgatory; but to meet with it embodied in such a practical shape—to face it, so to speak, in the flesh—to behold it, not as a theological speculation, but ‘living, moving, and having its being’ in a religious organisation—to behold such a faith cross his path, quickened, fertilised, and glorified as it is by self-sacrifice of an unusual kind—this would, indeed, be a reality for which he would hardly be prepared by any previous anticipation.

For the sake of an introduction and an illustration we have supposed the case of a person who, not being a Catholic, hears for the first time of the Helpers of the Holy Souls.

A Catholic would, of course, instinctively catch the general meaning of the phrase; for does he not pray frequently for the departed? Does he not even remember them at the table where his physical life is continually renewed—thus by a beautiful contrast, which is but one of the many marvellous inspirations of the Catholic heart, mingling with his grateful thanksgiving for his own daily food a sadly tender prayer for the absent dead? This is undoubtedly true; but there are many Catholics in our country who do not know much—and more who know nothing whatever—of that particular mode of aiding the

'Holy Souls,' and of that especial institution for carrying it out which is understood when we speak of the Society of the Helpers of the Holy Souls.

It is for the sake of both these classes that the following pages have been written, in the hope that their perusal may tend to strike, however imperfectly, a chord of practical sympathy towards the suffering dead, which our religion enjoins as a sacred duty, and in which our love, being by the very nature of the case free from even the suspicion of unworthy self-interest, can always find a solid satisfaction and purifying joy.

What, then, is the Society of the Helpers of the Holy Souls?

It is a Religious Community founded a few years ago in France with the special object of assisting the souls in Purgatory in all those various ways which the Providence of God has revealed, and which Catholic zeal has, in the manifold ingenuity of its generosity, been inspired to devise and apply.

The members of the Community, besides binding themselves by the three usual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, take a fourth obligation, the effect of which is that, according to the motto of their Order, they 'pray, suffer, and labour for the souls in Purgatory,' and offer up in their favour the satisfactory part of their works of mercy, their vows and prayers, and also the indulgences applicable to themselves both during their life and after death. Such, in a few words, is a general description of the Society. It is a tree planted upon the earth, but the cooling shade of its branches reaches forward into the world unseen. To Purgatory it owes its existence; before its gates it is ever faithfully watching and pleading, and thither flows the perpetual current of its manifold charity.

We now proceed to inquire what are the antecedents

of the Society, because by studying the details of its rise and progress we shall be best enabled to understand its spirit and appreciate its characteristics. It did not come into the world by chance, or in a moment; although its career is at present young, it has a remarkable history; and in order to apprehend its full significance we must ask who wrote the first page, and how it came to be written at all.

For many years this Society only existed as a pious idea, an inspiration, a yearning, a prayer, a hope lodged, and, for a considerable time, hidden as a seed in the breast of a comparatively unknown individual.

It seems *now* a wonder that so many centuries had passed without the project having been ever before conceived and realised. But, as Solomon says, 'All things have their season,' and the Divine Householder, 'Jesus Christ, 'bringeth forth out of His treasure new things and old.' The Church is a 'holy temple' whose foundation is one and unchangeable, but whose building is constantly receiving additional growth through the inspiration of grace and the coöperation of man; and the Order of the Helpers of the Holy Souls is one of those many new and beautiful stones that mark the progressive expansion of that living tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, the Catholic Church.

When God intends to manifest that He is the original Author, so to speak, of any special work, He often surrounds it by circumstances that, humanly speaking, would have seemed least likely to favour its accomplishment. He delights in drawing power out of weakness; He makes 'babes and sucklings' the depositaries of His secrets; He writes His cipher on some lowly heart which the world ignores; He comes suddenly, 'like a thief in the night,' and foreshadows to it an indication of His will, the full meaning of which will not be clearly unfolded until

the divinely-chosen hour shall have arrived for its execution.

So has it been with the origin of the Helpers of the Holy Souls.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER MARY OF PROVIDENCE : HER CHILDHOOD AND HOME LIFE.

THE first house was founded at Paris in 1856, but it really began many years previously in the sanctuary of a child's heart at another city of France. The ground-plan was there sketched, if we may use such a familiar term, by the finger of God, although that child's interior eyes could not then perceive all the outline. We must imagine ourselves on a certain bright summer's day at Lille; everything speaks of peace and gladness, the warm air is scented with flowers, the sky is not only cloudless, but almost dazzling in the transparent purity of its depths — a very ocean of blue suspended overhead. Ever and anon the ring of that fresh laughter, which only young hearts that have not yet known any great sorrow can give forth, breaks upon the ear. Now there is a racing of eager feet as we see some young girls vieing with each other in the chase of butterflies which are darting and flashing through the air like flowers on the wing. Suddenly one of these children stops, her look changes from a merry glance into a tender seriousness, and her playmates, as if under a simultaneous spell, pause, and, as they group themselves around her, listen to these singular and abrupt words: 'Do you know what is passing through my mind? Tell me, now, if one of our companions were in a prison of fire, and it were possible for us to get

her out by saying one word, O, how quickly we would do it, would we not?' Her little circle of listeners, wondering at the drift of this question, remained silent. How could they divine what she meant? What had her words to do with their pastime? Then came the key to the puzzle: 'Well, then, that is what Purgatory is; the souls there are in a prison of fire; but our kind God Who keeps them shut up there only asks from us one prayer that He may open the door—and this prayer we do not say.'

In another moment, without further allusion to a topic so unexpected, saddening, and unusual for a child's conversation, she bounded off again like a fawn, and they all resumed their sport.

One would have thought that on such a summer's day, with the sun shining gloriously, the green fields spangled with flowers, and butterflies on the wing, Purgatory would have been the last vision to come, even for a moment, before a child's imagination. Between the glad-some beauty of visible nature in association with the light-heartedness of childhood at play and the woes of an unseen land of Purgatory the contrast is so remarkable, so violent, one might say, that such a startling glance of the soul from one to the other must have been a movement of Grace. Had the thought of Purgatory only gleamed at fitful intervals before that child's mind, had it grown into no special devotion, had it left no extraordinary traces of faith and charity behind it, then the incident just recorded would have had no particular significance; it would have been forgotten among those many freaks of thought with which childhood abounds. But who can doubt the deep meaning of the event when he is told that the name of the tiny girl who asked a question so far beyond her years was Eugénie Marie Joseph Smet, the future foundress of the Helpers of the Holy Souls?

Eugénie was the daughter of M. Henri Smet, a gen-

tleman of good position at Lille. Her mother's maiden name was Montdhiver, whose family was connected with a distinguished branch of the old French nobility. Eugénie was born on the 25th of March 1825. At eleven years of age she was sent to school at the Convent of the Sacred Heart; she showed a quick intelligence at all her tasks, and was much beloved by her mistresses for her diligence, docility, and simplicity. Being naturally of a lively disposition, sympathetic, and effusive in her affections, she was the delight of those of her own age, and exercised, unconsciously, a kind of magnetic influence over them which was signally useful to her when she wanted them to join her, as she often did, in some pious practice. Often would Eugénie be seen surrounded by an eager and enthusiastic group of schoolfellows; and usually the theme of conversation was her favourite Purgatory; she talked aloud before them about her own thoughts, she pleaded with them for prayers for the poor suffering souls whom she loved so ardently, and then ended by pledging them all to make some especial effort for their liberation. There was no affected solemnity, no pretence about her; for when she had accomplished her object, she was at once ready to throw off her seriousness, and to be often the leader in their innocent games. This characteristic remained with her through all her future trials; she was ever cheerful and even vivacious; and the holy ruling passion of her heart, love for the souls in Purgatory, never cast a gloomy solemnity over her manner, never interfered with the genial elements of her disposition, nor clashed inharmoniously with other duties.

Besides her devotion to everything connected with Purgatory, another trait in her spiritual character was so strongly marked, so multiform in its activity, and so victorious over every obstacle, real or imaginary, that it attracted the observation of all with whom she was brought into any kind of contact. This was her wonderful love

for and unshaken trust in the Providence of God. Whenever the Divine Providence was in question, it may be truly said that she 'hoped all things and believed all things.' She was not merely resigned and trustful, but it seemed as if she almost welcomed difficulties in order that she might revel in the delight of abandoning herself entirely to the care of God; she was ever eager, like some impetuously confiding child, to fling herself into the arms of her Heavenly Father, with a boldness which sometimes alarmed others as if amounting to presumption; she liked, as it were, to challenge, even in the minute detail of her needs, the literal fulfilment of those wonderful words of Jesus Christ: 'Ask, and ye shall receive;' '*All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*'

The following anecdote, touching in its simplicity, will illustrate how soon she began to rely upon this evangelical promise as an unfailing treasury. It was announced that an unusually important ceremony was to take place at the convent chapel, and that, for the sake of uniformity, those scholars only who had white dresses would be allowed seats in front of the altar. This was an unexpected blow to the little Eugénie, for it was her delight to be as close to the Tabernacle as possible, not only to satisfy her love for the Blessed Sacrament, but also because she had a strong attraction to all the sublime externals of religion. She could not bear the idea of being deprived of her accustomed place; and yet what was to be done? She had no white dress, and as her family happened to be at some distance, in the country, there was no time to procure one. Some children would have fretted passionately at the disappointment; how does Eugénie act? She goes down as if by instinct on her knees to pray, and thirty years afterwards she recalled to memory the very words of her petition: 'O my dear Providence,' she said, 'I beseech You to send me a white dress; I will for ever love You and look

to You for everything, from the smallest things to the greatest, from a pin to heaven.' It was the custom to lay out on the bed of each pupil the uniform required for any special occasion. This was done on the previous evening, and it can easily be imagined how many little hearts fluttered with joyous emotion when, on silently entering the dormitory, they saw that they would not be disappointed on the morrow. But if there was one heart that throbbed more than another, not with anxiety, but with confident gratitude, it was that of Eugénie. She had asked the favour from no one, but she trusted that, in some way or other, the necessary passport to her favourite spot near the altar would arrive ; and she was right : a white dress was waiting for her, having been placed there by the unasked thoughtfulness of the good nuns, without any previous intimation on their part to Eugénie. This incident may seem a trifle, but Eugénie used to say in after life that it seemed as if she saw the hand of God Himself in this delicate care of His Divine Providence.

Another instance of the power which the idea of God in His character of Providence exercised upon her mind at so early a period is related of her. She used often to ponder what she could do for God. 'My God,' she frequently said, 'You are my Providence ; O, if I could some day be Yours !' And on one occasion whilst she was brooding over this desire, a sudden inspiration seemed to give a definite form to her yearning. As if a precious discovery had flashed upon her, as if a new star had just appeared on the hitherto vague expanse of desire, she exclaimed : 'Ah, this is the way in which I will be the Providence of my kind God ; He loves exceedingly the souls of Purgatory, and on account of His justice He cannot deliver them ; well, then, I will give Him those souls whom He loves, and I will entreat the whole world to give them to Him, by means of their prayers and by small sacrifices. I will

say to them, "Be the Providence of so good a God, since He is your Providence. Will not you give *something* to Him Who gives *everything* to you?"'

Who does not recognise clearly in the actions and prayers of the young pupil at the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Lille the rudimental lines of the portrait of her who is now most widely known as Mary of Providence?—a name which symbolises her faith, epitomises her virtues, and will give to her, besides the original distinction of foundress, a characteristic place in the history of her Order which it will be indeed difficult for any of its future members, however saintly in other respects they may be, ever to equal.

Eugénie had a remarkable love for the Guardian Angels, and with the beautiful ingenuity of her simple confidence, she used to ask her own Angel not only to defend her from evil, but to be the messenger of her pious wishes to others. For instance, when Madame Desmarquets, one of the mistresses to whom she was deeply attached, left the house at Lille, Eugénie felt her loss most keenly, but the sadness, instead of ending in a useless depression, only stimulated her the more earnestly to desire the aid of her prayers; so, on the Easter-day following, she asked her own Guardian Angel to communicate her wish to the Guardian Angel of Madame Desmarquets. She had no doubt that the message would be faithfully delivered, and to her great joy, though not to her surprise, a letter from Madame Desmarquets was put into her hands containing the following words: 'Trust more and more, my child, in your good Angel; you have been heard by mine; for on Easter-day, as you had desired, I did not fail to recommend you to the Heart of our Lord.'

This incident occurred just before the close of her school career.

The change from a life passed for several years under

the educational and religious superintendence of nuns, where every association tends to create an atmosphere of piety, to a permanent residence at home, must always be a period of most critical importance. If the family circle supplies many advantageous opportunities for developing the affections and character of a young girl, and for training her by experience for those ordinary duties in the world which will be the lot of most daughters, still there are counterbalancing dangers. If life is more domestic when schooldays are over, it is also less minutely watched ; and if it is more free, it is exposed to perils of which a school must be practically innocent. It may happen that parents will be careful to cultivate at home the pious habits which the convent has aimed at establishing firmly in the hearts of its pupils, but, too often, the home is only a concentrated image of the world outside, and the tide of frivolity, uncharitable criticism of the faults of others, unsanctified ambitions, and profitless diversions flows freely into its enclosure. In any case, the new sphere that is entered upon, and the hitherto inexperienced pleasures as well as responsibilities and temptations which are met with sooner or later when the barrier between girlhood in a religious school and womanhood at home is passed, cannot fail to create a situation full of importance to the soul.

Eugénie was not exposed to this peril of a thoroughly worldly home ; she had the happiness of a home where there ever reigned a spirit of mutual affection and unostentatious piety. But she shed many tears at quitting her beloved convent, not only because of her attachment to the good nuns, but for a higher reason. She was afraid lest, when removed from the regular life of study and holy exercises which she had for seven years been leading, she might fall into tepidity. She dreaded the very thought of possibly frittering away her soul upon those thousand nothings which, alas, bound the narrow horizon of the lives

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of so many, and make up its whole substance. Another of her fears was lest she should yield too much to the pleasures of her home joys, and forget the cross in the sunlight of earthly though innocent attachments.

She left school on the 4th of September 1843, for the country house at Loos-lez-Lille which her parents then occupied. Her mother, Madame Smet, with a mother's natural pride and delight, showed her a charming room that she had prepared for her, and fitted up with every little article of taste and comfort that would be likely to make her feel welcome to her home. But Eugénie's heart expanded far beyond the pretty toys of her boudoir. Many years afterwards she recalled that hour, and said : 'There was something that delighted me more than my room ; it was the view from the windows, where I saw nothing but the sky and the trees, and, peeping through their branches, the church-tower of the village, which seemed to say to me, "*Our Lord is here !*"'

Without some definite arrangement of time the best of intentions will simply be useless ; if colours are not fixed they will evaporate. Eugénie knew this well, and systematically divided her day between prayer, good works, and domestic duties. To relieve the poor was her delight, and her father, in order to supplement the pocket-money which he allowed her, used to give her permission to dispose in their favour of all the fruit that fell of itself in the orchard. Eugénie had broad views about this understanding, and often she was to be seen busily shaking the boughs, laughing heartily as the fruit thudded to the ground, and when asked what she was about, saying, with a droll pleasantry that was quite her own, 'I am giving a helping hand to my dear God.'

It is impossible to mention the details of her works of charity and devotion. Wherever there was a want to be supplied, or an example set, there Eugénie was the ever-

ready volunteer, facing difficulties and inventing expedients with a marvellous ingenuity and success. The word 'impossible' was not in her vocabulary; nor can we be much surprised when we remember her unwavering trust in what she called her 'beloved Providence.' She never entered or left her room without distinctly making an act of complete abandonment of herself to the disposition of God; and, in order to keep the thought of His watchful love ever engraved on her memory, she placed over her chamber-door a picture in which our Lord was figured shedding grain for the birds of the air from one hand, and arraying with the other the lilies of the field in their garments of beauty, whilst underneath there was a scroll inscribed with these words: 'Our Heavenly Father knoweth your needs; be not, therefore, anxious for the morrow.'

Amongst other good works, she was very zealous in collecting contributions for the Association of the Holy Infancy; and what influence she attributed to the Divine Providence was thus quaintly expressed by herself when she summed up the result of her exertions. Besides disposing of some thousands of lottery tickets, she managed to provide 850 prizes; and this was her explanation: 'When I began my lottery, I had but two prizes: first, a box, scarcely worth anything; and secondly, a great trust in Providence; but this last enclosed 849 in itself alone.'

In a soul like that of Eugénie, it is not to be wondered at if aspirations after a religious vocation began to develop themselves before she had been long at home; and it appears that she did not conceal them from her family; but her health was feeble, and as she suffered from severe neuralgic attacks, and required constant nursing, the decisive opposition that was made against her proposition was so reasonable that she was obliged to admit its force. In order to overcome these obstacles, she gave herself up more and more to prayer, and particularly to the intercession of

the Blessed Virgin. A statue of the Mother of God had been placed in her room, and consecrated at first under the title of our Lady of Providence, to which was subsequently added that of Queen of Purgatory ; and it was on one occasion in the month of May, whilst kneeling before this statue, that a kind of veiled intimation was given to her that her hopes of a religious life would be fulfilled. She felt an internal voice, which seemed to speak to her from the statue in these words : ‘The day will come when I shall be in a chapel.’ Without then fully comprehending their meaning, she was pacified and consoled. How the prophecy was eventually accomplished, the narrative of her life will explain hereafter.

If it be intensely interesting for some lover of art to watch the painter’s idea as with a kind of creative life it moves on the canvas, from line to line, form to form, and colour, until the whole stands forth revealed in the exquisite harmony of its completeness, so, in another sense and degree, it is a singularly attractive study when we are able to form at least some idea of the successive developments of the Divine plan in those elect souls whom God chooses out of millions to carry out some special design of His providence. The very first recorded sign of Eugénie’s future devotion to the souls in Purgatory appeared, as we have said, when, as a tiny child, she was chasing butterflies on a summer’s day. We can, fortunately, fix the date of another inspiration, which was an important advance towards that institution which proved afterwards to be her destiny and her glory. The 1st of November 1853 was a day on which the sun shone with a brilliance unusual at such a season of the year ; it was a day in perfect unison with the glorious solemnity of the Festival of All Saints. Eugénie experienced a more than ordinary joy ; but the very splendour of the earthly sun-rays, and the jubilant thought of that far more entrancing splendour by

which the Saints in heaven were encircled, and in whose ocean of light they were immersed, only served to turn her mind more strongly than ever to those souls who were longing for that heavenly home, but were as yet unable to enter its gates. The hosannas which came echoing so sweetly to the ear of her faith from the Celestial Jerusalem seemed to bring linked with them, in thrilling contrast, the sad voices of the dead in Purgatory, and to her heart the undertone of wail from the exiles was louder, more piercing, and, so to say, more personal, than the exultant strains of those whose 'winter' of sorrow was 'past and gone.'

During the Benediction on the afternoon of All Saints, Eugénie experienced an overpowering desire to establish an association of prayers and good works for the beloved dead. Afraid, however, as she was of being deceived by her own imagination, she prayed to God for illumination, and besought Him, if the idea was His will, and not her own fancy, to give her a proof, by inspiring one of her own friends with the same sentiment, and by causing her to speak to her on the subject immediately after her departure from the church. There was a flight of steps leading from the church to the village *place*. Eugénie's heart fluttered with feelings in which anxiety, fear, and hope were mingled together. No one had yet appeared in answer to her prayer; was, then, the idea that had seemed to stand like a messenger from God before her mind, only the apparition of a pious fancy? Another moment, and her feet would leave the boundary of the precincts of the church, and she must go home without a sign. Just at that very instant a friend with whom she was intimate advanced and stopped her with these words: 'My dear Eugénie, I am so glad to meet you; for at the Benediction the thought came into my mind that I should like to join you in doing all we can during this November for the souls in Purgatory.' This was enough for Eugénie,

and she went home full of her plan of starting an association in the village. The next day was All Souls; it is a day on which, notwithstanding all the consolations which it brings to a Catholic, many hearts are sad; for then it is that the familiar gravestones appear to arrest our eye with unusual significance; then it is that wounds of the past reopen as if they had never been closed, and memories rise up with agonising distinctness, of farewell words, graspings of the hand, and looks that pierced to the quick when lips yearning to speak once more became speechless. But whatever shade of human sorrow may have passed over the heart of Eugénie, there was one thought, on the early morn of that 2d of November, which set the key-note to the rest; the bells that evoked tears for so many others had for her a festal meaning, for they heralded upon earth by anticipation the speedy release of prisoners from Purgatory. O, she thought, 'how many exiles will see their true home to-day!' how many prayers for them will soon ascend!

Full of grateful delight, Eugénie received the Holy Communion; on many preceding Novembers she had enjoyed the same blessedness; but that Communion left an impression upon her soul as vivid and as deep as it was unexpected. The idea which she had entertained, only the evening previous, of an Association in aid of the souls in Purgatory now suddenly appeared narrow and insufficient, like a small seed that in a few hours had sprung up and expanded into a large tree, without any thought or touch of the sower. Eugénie now saw before her mind's eye, in place of her little association, nothing less than a RELIGIOUS ORDER. 'There were,' she said to herself, 'many communities devoted to the wants of the Church militant, but not one devoted to the unseen yet pressing needs of the Church suffering.' No sooner had this reflection penetrated her than another page of the Divine

Will opened before her, and with unspeakable emotion she read in it that she herself was called by God to fill up the void. Although Eugénie did not disguise from herself the serious sacrifices and difficulties that such a plan, if carried out, would involve, she was unable to doubt the internal fact of the impression; and without delay she went to impart it to the Abbé Lemahieu, the rector of the parish, and to ask his advice. The answer was a very decided negative to her proposal to found an Order, on the ground that she had enough to do in the parish, and that he thought her vocation was to stay in the world. He, however, not only encouraged the plan of an Association for prayers and good works, but inscribed his own name in the list of members.

Eugénie obeyed, without, however, being able to dismiss from her mind the idea of an Order. She worked with zeal at the Association, which in three months had reached to 1500. She induced all classes to join, and the attendance at the churches, the confessions, and devotions, particularly that of the Way of the Cross and Masses for the Dead, increased in a signal manner. Nor was the aid limited to prayers; for into many a needy cabin there came, unasked for, presents of clothing, accompanied by no name of the giver, but bearing a paper with the simple inscription, 'Pray for the souls in Purgatory.'

On the 25th of January 1854, Eugénie, with the sanction of her confessor, made a complete offering of herself and of all her actions for the benefit of the souls in Purgatory. Thus, without knowing that this promise was what is called the 'heroic vow,' she fulfilled it under the spontaneous inspiration of her own heart. At first, her confessor limited the vow to six months. Eugénie, however, as is known from the memorandum in her writing, and made at that time, prayed earnestly to God that He would give her the happiness of renewing it by an obliga-

tion to last throughout her whole life ; and such was the case, her confessor, at the end of the six months, making no opposition.

Whilst Eugénie listened patiently to all the reasons which were pressed upon her from various quarters, with a view to discourage her project of a community, even Bishop Chalandon warning her that nothing short of floods of supernatural light could justify her in abandoning her present sphere in the world, two presentiments, or rather prophetic intimations, produced a strong effect upon her mind. One was, that she would eventually become a religious, but not until she was thirty-three years old ; and the other was, that the will of God would be made clear to her by some priest of whom at that time she had no personal knowledge. The first impression was fulfilled, for she made her last vows only on the 25th of January 1858 ; and the second also proved true in an unforeseen way. A friend happened to tell Eugénie that she was going away for a journey with her father for some time, and that she intended, after about two months of travel, to visit Ars, and consult its saintly curé, M. Vianney, about some spiritual matters concerning herself. This was an opportunity which Eugénie at once looked upon as providential. Why should not she also ask his advice ? Why not commission her friend to inquire if the good curé approved of her idea of a community ? The friend agreed, and Eugénie informed her confessor of what she had done. On the 2d of August he met Eugénie by chance, and said to her, 'This morning I have offered up the Holy Mass, with the intention of asking God to illuminate the curé of Ars when he answers your friend's inquiry about yourself.' That 2d of August 1855 was never forgotten by Eugénie ; for, to her astonishment, the first letter that she received from her friend was not only dated the 2d of August, but it recounted that in the route of the journey Ars had been

taken first, instead of last, as was originally intended ; moreover, that she had seen M. Vianney, who had said, 'Tell her (Eugénie) that she shall establish an Order for the Souls in Purgatory whenever she wishes.'

This communication fortified Eugénie in her resolution. The first thing was to find fellow-associates ; and whilst she was quietly looking around the circle of her acquaintance for suitable postulants for the work, a widow of high position in society, and possessed of ample wealth, offered herself and her money. Three other ladies also, whose means were considerable soon followed the widow's example. To many persons this combination of circumstances would have seemed remarkably opportune ; with gold and personal service at hand all would start well. Eugénie, however, began before long to feel uneasy ; she distrusted this prosperous breeze and these pleasant waters ; she knew that power usually grows out of trial, and that the banner which waves most triumphantly is that of the Cross. 'No,' she one day exclaimed ; 'we should be too rich ; it is not thus that the works of God are established ; they begin with a point, and unfold themselves little by little.' The result proved her wisdom ; for these opulent candidates afterwards proceeded to play at being Sisters, calling themselves by religious titles when they met each other, but manifesting by the conspicuous elegance of their attire that their hearts belonged to the gay world of the living, and had little sympathy with these who were out of sight and beyond the range of fashion—the suffering dead.

Although the failure of this first attempt at a religious Association confirmed Eugénie's presentiment that the mode of proceeding savoured too much of the prudence of the 'natural man,' still it was for her a sharp trial, because she saw no immediate prospect of any realisation of her wishes.

The deceptive lights were scattered away, but a vacant

sky alone remained. In a short time, however, a 'little cloud' arose above the horizon, which, like that seen by the servant of the prophet Elias, proved to be the harbinger of great things. On the 16th of October, in the year of which we are speaking (1855), Eugénie prayed with more even than her wonted fervour, that God would hasten the accomplishment of her object; and she especially invoked the intercession of St. Theresa for the same end. Six days afterwards she received a letter from a friend, telling her that she had something very confidential to impart. She had been informed by a certain Mdlle. de F., a total stranger to Eugénie, that a project was in consideration, but at present known only to a very few, for establishing at Paris, in the parish of Saint-Merry, a religious congregation in aid of the souls in Purgatory; she wished, therefore, to impart this secret to Eugénie, and begged her to write upon the subject to Mdlle. de F. Eugénie was struck with this coincidence between her prayer on the 16th and this letter of the 22d; and she sent a few but not very explicit lines to Mdlle. de F. in reference to the cherished topic of her heart.

This led to a correspondence with the Abbé X. at Paris, who explained to Eugénie that he was endeavouring to organise a small community. At present it was only in the germ, but he hoped to develop it into something more like an Order, and he was anxious for Eugénie to come to Paris and confer with him as to its form and details. Matters had now gone so far, that Eugénie felt that the time was come for preparing her family for the possibility of a separation. She dreaded a painful opposition from her mother; but what was her surprise one evening on listening to these words dropping suddenly from her mother's lips, before even Eugénie had opened the subject to her, and without immediate reference to any previous point of the conversation: 'My child, I believe you are called to

found a community to help the souls in Purgatory ; and now I desire it. I venture to hope that I should remain a much less time in that place of expiation if you were to consecrate yourself entirely to that work of devotion.' In order still farther to secure her steps, Eugénie begged the Curé of Ars through the Abbé Toccanier to send her a direct answer from himself as to whether, considering the feeble state of her health, the difficulties of the work, and the terrible struggle which natural affection was beginning to raise in her heart, she ought to go to Paris and commence the work. The reply was unhesitatingly clear : 'The idea of founding an Order for the Souls in Purgatory comes from the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and He will bless your devotedness.'

In the mean time, the Abbé X. visited Lille ; and it was settled that Eugénie should go to Paris, see what had been done, and then come to a conclusion as to her future action. Before setting out for Paris, in order not to spend a sum upon the journey which she preferred to give in charity, she prayed, with her usual perfect trust in Providence, that God would send her the means, and thus still more clearly manifest His will. The answer came in the following unforeseen manner. One of her friends was going to take the Carmelite habit ; and as she wished Eugénie to be present on that solemn occasion, she wrote to invite her to Paris for the ceremony. It was a brief note, but the conclusion was significant : 'I know that, with all your works of charity, it would not be easy for you to undertake the expense of this journey ; that will explain to you the note of 400 francs enclosed in this letter.'

On the 19th of January 1856, Eugénie, after receiving the Holy Communion, left her home on a mission that was to be the dawn of a new life. Her heart was full of mingled emotions. One of her sisters was in high spirits at

the thought of her journey ; she looked upon it as a pleasure-trip ; 'but,' said Eugénie, when relating this part of her history, 'I understood well that for *me* it would be the road to Calvary. My heart was bruised, but the great step was taken and there must be no retiring backwards. . . . My chief occupation all the way to Paris was to salute the church-steeple as they came into sight, and to pray, from the bottom of my heart, for strength and courage, for I felt that my spirit of energy was forsaking me.'

CHAPTER III.

FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORDER.

THE first impression of Eugénie on arriving in Paris was not calculated to dissipate those fears of the difficulty of her project which had tormented her spirit during the journey. If it was hard for her to part, even for a short time, from the sweet society of her family, she had comforted herself with the prospect of finding in Paris a spot where she could have that undisturbed seclusion and opportunity for recollection, which, combined with pious exercises to be practised in common by herself and her future companions, would be more than a compensation for the sacrifices she had made.

What, then, was this tranquil nook, this little green oasis, which awaited her in the Rue St. Martin ? It was a poor lodging in a fourth story ; but the poverty mattered nothing. This apartment had a door opening into another room, where the low buzzing of young voices, the occasional shuffling of uneasy feet, and the audible sufferings of a piano in frequent distress under the thumping of inexperienced fingers, gave unmistakable evidence of a school. Such was really the case. A certain Mdlle. N., who

obtained a livelihood by taking pupils, and had a great devotion to the holy souls, had offered a share in her humble apartment to the proposed community. Mdlle. N. had the best intentions, but no wonder she was often glad to relieve the tedious monotony of her daily work by frequent visits to the other room. That fatal door of communication was so opportune, so tantalising, so very suggestive, how could she resist the invitation? All this was natural, but the arrangement was destructive of the privacy and regularity of life necessary for the preliminary training of a religious association.

Eugénie felt something like an electric shock at this unexpected difficulty; and her sanguine imagination was rather roughly disenchanted by the 'nakedness of the land' on to which she had just stepped with such eager feet. Whatever may have been her sensations at first, she soon recovered her courage, and sought an early interview with Monseigneur Sibour, then Archbishop of Paris. The dialogue of this meeting was characteristic on both sides.

'What diocese do you belong to, and what is your purpose in coming here?' inquired the Archbishop.

'I am of Cambrai,' replied Eugénie, 'and I have come with the intention of founding, for the relief of the souls of Purgatory, a community in which all the works will be done with that object.'

'Have you any resources?'

'Very small.'

'Have you a house?'

'No, Monseigneur.'

'Then, what do you mean to do?'

To the last inquiry Eugénie replied, with a frank simplicity and faith that struck at once the centre of the good prelate's heart, 'Tell me, would you consider it a more extraordinary thing if Providence, *to Whom all the houses in Paris belong*, were to find a house for me, than it was

for Providence to bring me into coopération with a priest whom I never saw, and who has the same design in view as myself?

The Archbishop's answer was worthy of Eugénie's question. It was as the signal of a martial trumpet sounding the advance. 'Go, my child; the faith that removes mountains builds houses. Tell aloud the city of Paris that both the head and the heart of the Archbishop of Paris are yours for the carrying on of your work; and if ever you want support or advice, command my service.'

By a train of circumstances evidently providential, Eugénie made the acquaintance of a Madame N., who, being wealthy and charitable, rendered her important aid. This lady, whilst preparing a number of gifts for the poor on the last day of the year, was suddenly struck by a new thought. 'These poor people,' she said to herself, 'will rejoice to-morrow; but for the souls in Purgatory there will be no New-Year's gifts.' She at once determined to have a number of Masses celebrated for their solace; nor did the idea prove only transient. It pressed upon her so powerfully that she found herself saying almost aloud, 'What is the meaning of this persistent impression about the holy souls?' And then, according to her own statement, she heard an interior voice telling her that it referred to *an institution*, about which, the voice declared, 'thou shalt be informed very soon.' This occurred on the 1st of January 1856, and on the 26th, Eugénie called upon Mdme. N. to explain her own intended scheme and to solicit assistance. This same lady was the first to introduce Eugénie to the Père Aussant, a Dominican highly distinguished for his prudence and deep spiritual discernment as a director. Père Aussant no sooner examined the circumstances of the situation than he decided that Eugénie should leave her family permanently and fix herself in Paris,

She felt herself in a difficulty, because, on leaving home, she had promised to return soon after seeing how the work was going on in Paris. Père Aussant, however, was resolute; and after listening to his exhortation she retired, and threw herself on her knees to pray that her mother might herself send her a request to prolong her visit in Paris. Her prayer had been anticipated; for on reaching her room, a letter from her mother was put into her hands, in which the following sentence was contained: 'My dear child, I do not think you have had time to obtain sufficiently complete and accurate information about the foundation of the community. You had better, therefore, stay longer.'

After a brief period Eugénie went home for the last time, to prepare her family for the final sacrifice. There is a firm but touching letter to her from Père Aussant, in which he advises and encourages her not to delay her departure longer than was absolutely necessary. Amongst other remarks, he says: 'Know how to leave God for God, and to leave what you love for what you ought to love more. . . . The time for making conditions with God is over: henceforth I forbid you to ask the smallest sign from God as a test, no matter what the result be that you desire to obtain. . . . You will want a house immediately; God knows that, and it is enough; it is not our business but His to find one, we have only to seek one. . . Leave, then, everything; those poor of yours, those good works, those parents, and all that is not God, or not God alone. Henceforward, it is God only Whom you must love and serve.'

When Eugénie arrived, for the second time, at Paris, she found the condition of the nascent community far more straitened, in every respect, than she had anticipated. The pressing question each day was how to find food enough to maintain life. Needlework was tried, but the supply of work before long totally failed. By chance a child called

to ask if certain imitation-pearl bracelets, which she said had been ordered, were ready: the little messenger had come by mistake to the wrong house; but the error proved fertile in its consequences, for it gave a hint that was soon utilised, and fancy-work of that kind became an employment of the needy Sisters. With hard toil it was possible to gain at the end of the day just the value of a shilling—1 franc 25 centimes! Every drop of water had to be bought, and at the utmost not more than a pennyworth could be allowed for every purpose. There was only one chair; and as this was reserved as a luxury for the most fatigued, the Sisters obtained two benches, which had to be placed on the table at night in order to leave space enough for the beds to be unrolled. There were not shawls enough for the number of inmates, scanty as this was; and after doing duty as bed-coverings during the hours of repose, they were worn by the Sisters in going out to Mass, some of them having to wait at home until the others returned with the necessary raiment.

When the indigence was more than usually severe, special recourse was had to prayer, and never in vain. Once there was only a five-centime piece in the common purse. 'It is useless to go to market with that sum,' said the Sister who had the charge of the provision department, to Eugénie; and as she spoke she held up the piece of money with a look of blank despondency. The only reply she got from Eugénie, who had just entered the house, was a cheerful smile, accompanied by these words, 'Well, now is the moment for trusting to Providence.'

At that instant an envelope was put into her hand containing a note of a hundred francs. There was no letter inside, nor any clue, to indicate the donor, and Eugénie had not the slightest idea from what source it came. All she knew was that she had been that morning praying at an altar of the Blessed Virgin that some one might be

inspired to give her a hundred francs, and here was the answer prompt, and precise even to the exact amount which she had named.

To add to her own trials, Eugénie had now to suffer the additional and unforeseen cross of losing the wise and solacing counsels of Père Aussant, and also the aid of Madame N., upon whom she had counted as a valuable future contributor towards enabling her to remove from the confined and unhealthy room in the Rue St. Martin; for both Père Aussant and her first benefactress quitted Paris for good. The former, however, before leaving, urged her to seek for a house, and to give herself up entirely to the guidance of God in regard to this inquiry. She felt, she said, an internal prompting to turn down the Rue de la Barouillère, and there she stopped before No. 16. Although convinced that this was the spot beyond which she was not to go, she was dismayed by the notice-paper, which bore these words—'HOUSE TO BE SOLD.'

The house, then, was not to be *let*; inquiries were at once made, the result of which was to assure Eugénie that the proprietor, M. Assonvilliers, would on no account alter his proposal. Eugénie appealed to God, and besought Him to change M. Assonvilliers' mind; faith, as usual, was victorious, and Eugénie was accepted as a tenant on the 19th of June, M. Assonvilliers himself signing the necessary documents, instead of his agent, at his own express wish.

After securing the house, the next step was to obtain permission to have the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel, for without this mighty source of strength the community felt that they would sink under the difficulties of their condition. Severe poverty was still their lot; but what could they not endure with Jesus close at hand to remind them of Bethlehem and Calvary! This treasure was given to them in November during the Octave of the

Dead ; and at the side of the altar was placed the statue of the Blessed Virgin which formerly had been in the little oratory at Eugénie's home, and which she had venerated so fervently under the title of our Lady of Providence. Those mysterious words, 'The day will come when I shall be in a chapel,' formerly so unintelligible, when they seemed to be breathed forth from the statue into Eugénie's spirit, now became clear ; they were no illusion of the fancy, but a prophecy fulfilled. How harmoniously the aspirations of the past were now seen to blend with the stern yet blessed reality of the present ! Between the delicate girl who used to delight in looking by day from her chamber-window at the church tower peering through the green trees, or watching the weird stars at night with a wistful reverence, and the foundress of a community already heroic in its struggles as well as its object, there would not, at one time, have seemed to be much connection ; yet now how luminous was the link !

On the 8th of November, Eugénie solemnly dedicated the community to our Lady of Providence, and kneeling before the statue to which we have alluded, she placed the keys of the house at its foot, and begged the Blessed Virgin to be its Superior as well as its protectress, whilst she mentally resigned her own office into the hands of the Mother of God. Very soon afterwards, application was made to the Archbishop of Paris for permission to expose the Blessed Sacrament upon the altar, and for regular Benediction on stated days. The Archbishop hesitated at first, saying that even communities of thirty years' standing would hardly venture to ask for such favours.

Eugénie, however, with an earnestness often quaintly flavoured with a piquant and ready wit, which made her irresistible, replied : ' Ah, Monseigneur, what would

you have? The youngest children are always the boldest.' The Archbishop seemed still undecided, and even exclaimed: 'It is impossible; I cannot give such an authorisation.' Eugénie then showed intense emotion, and thus implored him to comply with her petition: 'The souls in Purgatory,' she said, 'are holding your pen.' 'Do you think so?' was the Archbishop's last remark; and then he gave the signature without another word. How little did he then imagine that his own soul would be speedily summoned to the Judgment, and that amongst those who would weep and pray for him none would be more ardent than she whom charity for the dead had made so resolute and urgent with the living!

Hitherto, although the members of the little community were dressed in a uniform habit of black, like simple mourning, and had been allowed to assume names of religion, their institution had not been elevated and supernaturally annealed by vows. The solemnity of the consecration took place on the 27th of December 1856, the feast of the Evangelist of Love, St. John, when Eugénie, as Mother Superior, and five others, espoused themselves to Jesus Christ. It was a day of inexpressible joy, soon, however, to be clouded with the shadow of a terrible catastrophe; for on the 3d of January 1857, only seven days after the consecration, all Paris was startled and horrified by the news that the Archbishop had fallen under the hand of an assassin. Well might the Abbé Toccanier, writing as the representative of the saintly Curé of Ars to the Mother Superior, under that title of Mary of Providence by which we must now designate Eugénie, say: 'I confess it is easier for me to weep with than to console you. Death has taken from you a protector upon earth, but it provides another for you in heaven. The suffering Church has its martyrs here below. . . . The good curé prays for and blesses you with all his heart. A house

which erects itself on the Cross shall never fear tempest nor rain; the Cross is the divine seal.' These words of the Abbé Toccanier were speedily in process of fulfilment, for the community now began rapidly to develop itself in every respect. Through the liberality of several friends, and especially of Madame N., who has been mentioned as her earliest benefactress in Paris, the house in the Rue Barouillère, which had hitherto been rented, was now bought from M. Assonvilliers. Mother Mary of Providence made her vows in perpetuity at the hands of Cardinal Morlot, the successor of Archbishop Sibour; a Jesuit father was appointed regular chaplain to the house; new members joined the establishment; the rule of St. Ignatius was adopted as the guiding principle of their religious life; and the organisation, both temporally and spiritually, became more complete.

In tracing the growth of the institution, and the successive modes in which the love of the souls in Purgatory found means for manifesting itself in acts of practical sacrifice, it is worthy of notice how little was due to any preconceived plan in the mind of the foundress. She knew well, and yearned passionately for, her object, but she had designed no ideal constitution which she was anxious to see realised; she had no personal hobby, no pious crotchets, no ambition to be original, even for the glory of God. To pray, suffer, and labour for the souls in Purgatory was her mark, but she left the direction of the arrow of her purpose to the providence of God.

The gratuitous visitation of the sick poor at their own homes is one of the chief features, characteristic duties, and glories of the Order, and yet the idea was first suggested by what might have appeared to an ordinary mind a mere incident of chance. A few days after the entrance of the community into their house in the Rue Barouillère, an unknown lady called, and begged one of the Sisters to

visit a dying person in the neighbourhood. The Mother Superior saw in this circumstance the finger of God. 'St. Joseph,' she said, 'has sent us this sick person.' She at once recognised this particular path of charity to be eminently suited for the purposes of aiding the souls of Purgatory, as clearly as she perceived that the sphere of teaching was not congenial to the spirit of the community, although, through a variance of opinion upon this point, she was obliged to give up the coöperation of the Abbé — who had first encouraged her to come to Paris.

There are few works of piety which require such patience, such tenderness, such self-mortification, and frequently such skilful tact, as the visitation of abodes where misery, pain, disappointment, ignorance, and often vice, meeting together, form one great social, corporal, and spiritual wound. All who know something of the condition of many of the poor in very large cities will have an idea of the penitential character of this duty ; but what must it be in Paris, the focus of so much fashionable sensuality and infidelity in high circles, and of revolutionary lawlessness, fanatical communism, and desperate hatred of everything allied to property and religion in the lower strata of society ? The Sisters of the new Order now learned by experience what grievous shocks, not only to their natural delicacy of thought and feeling, but to the very first principles of their faith, awaited them frequently as they left their own quiet and holy precincts to grope their way through obscure alleys, fetid with nauseous exhalations, and amidst the scarcely suppressed jeers of passers-by, to arrive at a room in which they knew not whether they dared to speak openly of God or not. The case of the very first sick person who was visited will illustrate in some degree the difficulties which the Sisters had to encounter. The poor woman, not detecting under her visitor's simple dress that she was a member of any reli-

gious community, thus replied to her suggestion about the importance of making her confession : ' Madame, I am a Christian, but I never confess, for I detest priests ;' and eventually, after yielding to the persuasions of the Sisters, and receiving the Holy Communion, she said : ' Had I but known that you were nuns, nothing in the world would have induced me to receive, still less to have listened to, you.' What the ignorance of some of the poor was, may be judged from the following anecdotes. A Sister was doing her best on one occasion to induce a workman to go to his sacramental duties, and having succeeded, asked him if he had any choice as to what priest he would prefer. His answer would have disconcerted most persons by its astounding naïveté : ' I don't care what priest it is, provided he is a Christian.' A woman also, who was being instructed as to the elements of Christianity, said with a dash of quiet irony that must have, even in so serious a matter, raised a smile in the listener : ' I feel that I want some one to adore ; still, it cannot be my *husband*.'

The following conversation reveals one of those curious states of mind, to deal with which successfully must have required no little tact on the part of the Sisters. One of the invalids whom they visited, and who had formerly been in good circumstances, agreed to the desire of the Sister that she should make the acquaintance of the Mother Superior, whom she described as being a friend. Mother Mary of Providence accordingly went, and upon asking the patient what pictures were hung up above her bed, received this singular reply : ' *That* one is a "Christ," but it is in a wrong place : a "Christ" is very well in a church, but not in a room ; I am of too sensitive a temperament to have such a sight before my eyes.' ' But,' said the Reverend Mother, ' it is a great consolation amidst the troubles of this life to contemplate

Jesus on the Cross.' 'No, no,' retorted the other; 'a crime can never be a consolation to me'—in allusion to the sin of the Jews: 'the Holy Virgin is a different thing; it is more pleasant to look at.'

The devotion of the Sisters to their sick—so tender, so patient, and so regular as it was—often produced an extraordinary effect when it was discovered that they refused any kind of remuneration. For some time one of them had been attending an aged person, who was not aware that her visitor was a religious, as it would not have been prudent to tell her at first, on account of her avowed antipathy to everything pious; at length she requested the Sister to say how much her charge for nursing was. 'Nothing,' she replied; upon which her patient, astounded at such self-denial, exclaimed with emotion, 'Look, I have been seventy-two years upon this earth, and never till now have met a being like you.' Her true conversion to God, after years of neglect of Him, soon followed. 'You may visit me,' said another, 'and talk to me about religion, if you insist upon it; but I make this condition—for one talk about religion you must read to me nine times out of some novel.' Soon, however, the power of grace and the winning persuasion of the Sister prevailed, and the delight of the sick person was to hear henceforth about nothing but holy things.

Wherever the Sisters penetrated they carried with them a peculiar influence; as these good Samaritans of the body moved along from sick-bed to sick-bed, the 'odour of Christ' flowed from them, and, as it were, impregnated the surrounding atmosphere with a purifying fragrance. Nurses of the diseased and dying, they became also missionaries of the Faith to others who were physically well but morally ill; and the priest, following in a track which women like them could alone open, reaped in the tribunal of Penance many an unexpected harvest, of which the fructifying seeds were sown by these unpretending pioneers of

Christ, who were welcomed as the 'good ladies in black' in places from whose threshold any ecclesiastic in his soutane would have been often ejected with scornful determination.

The gratuitous visitation of the indigent sick at their own homes was, as we have already noticed, suggested to the foundress by what seemed an accidental circumstance ; it was, however, an evidently providential inspiration, and has led, and is daily leading, to important results beyond its own immediate sphere. When the lamp of charity is carried by devoted hands, its rays expand far and wide ; and thus we see by the history which we are now sketching that one light kindled another ; for the love of the souls of the dead has borne as one of its many fruits the spiritual resurrection of many dead souls of the living, who but for that charity would have never left the grave of their sins.

As the appeals to the Community for their personal services increased to a degree that was beyond the resources of their numbers and means, a pressing question arose in the mind of the foundress as to what was to be done. How could the Sisters work hard for their daily bread, and yet be ever ready to nurse and aid with food, clothing, or money so many whose cry came to their ears with an eloquence that pierced their hearts ? Like the builders of the Temple of old, who carried a sword in one hand and worked with the other, they had to fight against want, in their own self-defence, and at the same time to sustain their fellow-creatures. It was a crisis out of whose pangs a new offspring of charity was born. Mother Mary of Providence, after pondering anxiously over her glorious motto, 'To pray, to suffer, and to labour,' at length felt within her a fresh inspiration. 'Why,' thought she to herself, 'should we not lift up this banner on high above the small enclosure of our community ? why not let it float unfurled, so as to overtop the battlements of our little citadel, and be

a signal to the faithful in the outer world that we want their help? The idea was generous and wise, and it succeeded; that which began in a cry of distress at the inability of the religious in the Rue Barouillère to satisfy the divine hunger of charity towards the dead and the living awoke an echo outside whose sounds began to travel on quickly and with increasing volume; the hands, that at first were almost timidly stretched out, became magnetic, and persons of all classes, ages, and positions in society deemed themselves happy in being enabled to coöperate with the desired object.

In 1857 the admirable plan was adopted of creating, by the union of prayer and good works, a bond of fellowship between the Order of Helpers of the Holy Souls and persons desirous to have a share in their pious objects and privileges, without severing themselves from the sphere and duties of their ordinary life. This institution is called the 'Association of Honorary Members,' and the conditions are exceedingly simple, consisting only of the obligation of reciting a few prayers daily, and of contributing a small fixed sum annually, which goes towards the maintenance of the charitable undertakings of the Society.

In order not to interrupt the thread of the history of the foundress and her community, we prefer to give the details of the rules in another chapter.

The Association was not long in developing another phase of affiliation; the interchange of devotion, sympathy, and united action, which was established between the honorary members and the religious themselves, generated, so to say, a higher and closer consanguinity of relationship. The greater frequency of thoughts about the suffering dead, and also of actions done with reference to their deliverance—and above all, the influence which radiated far around, like a holy contagion, from the example and enthusiasm of the Order of the Helpers as from a centre, had the following

effect. A desire arose amongst certain ladies to imitate the religious observances and the charitable actions of the Sisters more closely than was intended or was practicable for the honorary members—they wished to share in some of the services of their chapel, to attend instructions there, to have opportunities of more personal intercourse with them, and to take their post by their side, or to supply their place to some degree, in their absence, at the homes of the poor and sick. This desire was welcomed by the foundress as a means likely not only to increase the sanctification of those who were willing to undertake the duties which such an affiliation would involve, but also to be of considerable benefit to the Sisters themselves, by lightening a portion of their labours.

This was the origin of an organisation which occupies a middle place between the honorary members and the religious. Their obligations are more extensive than those of the former—they receive, for instance, a formal consecration, attend Mass at certain times in the chapel of the Order, work for the poor at regular meetings held for that purpose, and recite daily the Vespers for the Dead. They bear the name of Lady Associates.

Their first inauguration took place on the 21st of March 1859, when his Eminence Cardinal Morlot presided, and the solemn act of consecration was made by twenty-eight ladies, who had previously been under probation for some months.

The experience of the Sisters when visiting the sick brought a special want before the mind of the foundress, which led to the formation of another beautiful channel of charity. When the sick person became more or less convalescent it was impossible, on account of new and more urgent claims, for the visits to be continued. Hence it happened frequently that much of the good influence that had been produced faded away; the seed was sown and

promising flowers of faith and peace sprang up, only to wither away through want of culture. The tenderness and the cheerful winning self-devotion of the religious, nay, the mere occasional vision of their sombre habit, kept alive the spirit of thoughtfulness about death and eternity which had been long extinguished in many a neglected heart. But how were these associations to be continued? how were the foundations of the barest elements of religion to be built upon by a more complete instruction? This was the problem to be solved; and solved it was by a fresh sacrifice on the part of the Sisters. They gave up a part of the Sunday to the entertainment of those of the poor whom they invited to come; a conference was established under the patronage of Blessed Peter Claver; a greenhouse was transformed into an oratory dedicated to our Lady of Salette, and simple explanations of the gospel of the day or some point of the Catechism were given after the singing of hymns. Mothers were invited to bring their children, who, cradled in misery, found to their delight and surprise what a fairy-like change it was from their cramped and oppressive dens to the sweet freshness, ample space, and merry liberty of the garden of the nuns. Who can doubt but that the sight of these poor children, so happy at least for a while, and who indirectly owed their joy to the souls in Purgatory, must have sometimes revived in the mind of the good foundress the memory of the days of the butterfly chase, when her own merry laugh and gambols were linked in a strange combination with the sacred interests of the dead? The first of the Conferences of Blessed Peter Claver dates from the 6th of February 1859.

On the 4th August in the same year an event took place which fell as a heavy blow upon Mother Mary of Providence—the saintly Curé of Ars was taken to his rest. His messages through the Abbé Toccanier had been an indescribable source of strength to Mother Mary of

Providence ; when he approved she was always happy, no matter what her difficulties were. These were some of his last words in reference to her, when she had written under severe bodily suffering, asking for his prayers: 'How can she doubt that it is God's will that she should suffer, since she has offered up herself a victim for the souls in Purgatory? Our merciful God wishes for this martyrdom, in order that it may draw down His benedictions upon her and her house.' What he thought of her can be imagined from his expression when told that there was a possibility of her paying a visit to Ars: 'O, so much the better ! I prefer a visit from her to that of a queen ; it does one good to see these beautiful souls !'

It was not long after the foundation of the house at Paris before the young tree began to put forth new branches. 'Increase and multiply' is indeed a great spiritual law in all religious orders whose vitality is strong. The first city after Paris which applied for an establishment of the Helpers of the Holy Souls was Nantes,* and in July 1864, the work was in operation. The next voice of appeal was almost startling, from its suddenness and the antecedently improbable quarter of the globe from which it came. On the 4th of August 1867, Mass was celebrated by a Bishop in the little chapel at Paris ; amongst the intentions which he was secretly offering up to God was one for light to enable him to discover what would be the best Order to introduce into a far-distant diocese. He left the altar under a powerful impression that he was on the very spot where the treasure was to be sought. He was to be the link between the Chinese empire, the souls in Purgatory, and the house in Rue Barouillère. The prelate was Monseigneur Languillat, Vicar-Apostolic of Kiang-Nan, the diocese to which Shanghai belongs. The particular works which the Sisters were invited to undertake were the

* No. 18 Boulevard Delorme.

superintendence of a number of Chinese Catholic virgins, the preparation of persons desiring to become Catholics, and the direction of an orphanage and schools. Although the teaching of schools is not one of the duties of the Order, and was strongly opposed by its foundress, it was considered that, on account of the peculiar circumstances of China, the prohibition might be dispensed with in that country. The Reverend Mother foresaw many difficulties in the undertaking, but the term 'impossible' did not seem to her, she said, a Christian word. So on the 1st of December 1867, the Bishop's sanguine hope was at length realised, and a select number of the Sisters began their noble career in China, being welcomed to land by the very Jesuit father who had formerly been for seven years the chaplain of the house in Paris.

This work advanced so prosperously, that in 1870 there were in Shanghai three establishments under the charge of eighteen native religious—namely, two day-schools, and an asylum for old men.

In 1869, Brussels had the privilege of seeing the Order established at No. 9 in the Rue Josaphat; and during the summer of the same year the long-expected Brief of approbation arrived from Rome.

CHAPTER IV.

LAST DAYS OF THE FOUNDRESS.

IF the figure of Mother Mary of Providence has not been lately brought so prominently before our readers as at the beginning of this narrative of her Order, the reason is obvious. She was ever its foremost pioneer, its wisest counsellor, its most vigorous promoter, and its most devoted servant; but as she lived not for herself, but for her work, the very progress of the institution tended to

hide in some degree the form of the individual. Do not the wide-spreading branches and rich foliage of the oak overshadow the parent stem, out of which originally all this magnificent outgrowth has sprung? But now our thoughts must gather round her again, and we are to look at her with more than usual interest, as upon one whose failing strength shows too clearly that the evening shades are advancing of that 'night when no man can work.' We are called upon to turn for a while from tracing the several stages of the increasing progress of the Order which Mother Mary of Providence was the first to establish in the Church, that we may watch with another kind of reverential eagerness the closing scenes of her own life.

There are certain careers which are unequal in their greatness; they astonish, attract, and yet also disappoint; perhaps their beautiful dawn ends after fitful changes of brilliance and shade, in a gloomy night; or daybreak and many after-hours are stormy, but the night is clear and magnificent. The highest excellence is when all is harmonious from first to last, with nothing to suggest unevenness of action and character, nothing to indicate to lookers-on, after the closest study, the least oscillation in the loftily moral orbit which has been once entered by deliberate resolve. And this may be truly said, humanly judging, of Mary of Providence: to pray, to suffer, and to labour, was the grand passion of her earliest youth, the creed of her Order, and the farewell lesson of her last moments. For a considerable period her frequent weakness and sufferings had led to the conclusion that a fatal disease had begun slowly but steadily to vitiate her constitution. There were, she used to say, five things which she had always dreaded to encounter—namely, separation from her family, the foundation of a community, the uncertainty as to securing the necessary support of her religious, the contracting of debts, and an attack of cancer.

In reference to these, she remarked with a peculiarly tranquil smile: 'Well, by the grace of God all these five have been my lot.' It was the last which, after an untold martyrdom of excruciating pain, opened for her the door to eternal rest. Her malady prostrated her completely in the August of 1870; even then she was heard to exclaim: 'If my pangs were *now and then* endurable, I should feel it to be a great repose.' Her own agonies, however, did not absorb her attention; France was in the midst of the throes of a gigantic war, and one of her pressing anxieties was to establish a place of refuge and succour for the wounded, which she did under the roof of her own house. When the thunder of the cannon boomed more loudly than usual around Paris, she, instead of quivering with nervous alarm, or dwelling mainly with her thoughts on the physical miseries of battle, saw everything from that point of view where her soul was ever taking its stand. We all interpret things according to our predominant habit: death, according to the views of a commander in battle, means to him so much diminution of the living military resistant force before him; to a physician it is the natural issue of an exhausted organic vitality; to the Christian martyr it is peace and glory. With Mother Mary of Providence, death was the instantaneous end of the time of a human probation. The mere corpse almost vanished out of her thoughts, and the immortal soul rose before her imagination in all the awful clearness and fulness of its individuality and responsibility; death, and especially death in battle, sudden and violent, meant to her the flash of the Judgment, tremendous in its result, and irrevocable. It seems quite natural, therefore, to find her exclaiming, as the echoes of the guns strike upon her ear: 'O my God, how many souls are appearing before Thee! Mercy, O my Jesus! I can think of nothing but of the souls who are entering into their eternity'—*their*

eternity : for she felt the force of an eternity which is no vague idea, but an individual reality. '*This*,' she said, 'at all events, is a truth—and what a truth !' When her agonies of pain were unusually excessive, she never allowed them to engulf her mind, as is so often the case with less intrepid spirits ; she made these water-floods 'praise the Lord,' as they swept through her enfeebled frame, and turned their expiatory current into the scorching land of Purgatory. 'I will make *all* things new,' says our Divine Lord ; and they who are full of 'the mind of Jesus' have this same power, according to the degrees of their sanctity, of transfiguring common clay into gold, bitters into sweets, and of giving to dumb things a marvellous voice. 'O Jesus, my Master !' said she whose latter moments we are narrating, 'may each pang tell Thee of my love, and ask from Thee the deliverance of a soul in Purgatory ;' and again, 'Make the Cross give me love ; for twenty-eight years have I have been offering this prayer, without taking much account of all that I am asking for in this petition ; let us cleave to the Cross, it is our only hope ; life is so short, and eternity will never finish ; let us then already belong to eternity ; how can one attach oneself to anything but the Cross ? it is that which holds up our weakness.' Besides looking constantly upon the crucifix, and invoking the names of Mary and Joseph, she used often, with that playful simplicity that never left her, to ask for her 'chloroform,' for such she called a rosary that formerly had belonged to the Curé of Ars, and over whose beads she kept repeating, 'Fiat, Jesus !'

When we think of the condition of Paris during those days, the contrast between what was passing within that humble chamber and the outside world is something which it is beyond the power of imagination to fully grasp. The streets were resounding night and day with the tramp of armed men marching to the clang of martial

music, with the fitful rushings to and fro of excited mobs, and with the blasphemous and obscene songs that were pouring forth in unchecked freedom from the lips of inebriated ruffians of both sexes.

Here and there, too, alarm-bells were ringing, on the real or pretended ground of a conflagration, or a threatened assault from the lines of the enemy ; whilst huge shells, hissing as they careered through the air, and exploding with a lurid flash, left not unfrequently, as stern evidence of their devastating track, the roofs of houses crushed in, iron balconies which, wrenched into grotesque shapes, perilously overhung the passers-by, and the more repulsive *débris* of mangled human limbs lying on the pavement amidst pools of blood. Such were some of the scenes which history records as taking place in Paris at this period ; such were the sights and sounds that met the eye and the ear.

Hell and heaven seem sometimes almost to touch each other in the awful medley of this world ; Satan walks by the very side of Christ. Let us turn away a few paces from the outer world of Paris, and note what was passing in the Rue Barouillère. There—in a room in which nothing is to be seen but such objects of piety as sacred pictures, books of devotion, and a crucifix, and where nothing is to be heard but the language of Christian faith, patience, and love—the foundress of the Helpers of the Holy Souls is calmly awaiting the summons of Him for Whom alone she had cared to live ; like Mary, she is listening for that sweet message, ‘The Master is come, and calleth for thee.’ There, surrounded by her faithful and weeping spiritual daughters, the Mother, placing herself in heart and mind at their feet, beseeches their forgiveness for any faults she may have committed, and imparts to them the farewell request and command, that all should ‘increase more and more in zeal for the souls

in Purgatory,' and that 'Paris, Nantes, Brussels, and China should have but one heart and one soul.' There, on the 9th of January, she had the consolation of receiving the fortifying grace of holy Unction, and on the 6th of February her last Communion, at the hands of one around whose heroic soul the aureola of martyrdom was already beginning to form its golden rays. Père Olivaint, of the Society of Jesus, was her confessor, and henceforth his immortal name will ever be intertwined with the kindred memory of Mother Mary of Providence.

The last visit to her of her director was another similar instance of those numerous providential circumstances which had led to her being called, even in her early years, 'the spoilt child of Providence.' On the Feast of the Agony of our Lord, the 7th of February, she had frequent attacks of suffocation, followed by a kind of stupor, but on awaking, she declared repeatedly that Père Olivaint would come to see her at three o'clock. He generally came later, but at three precisely he arrived. When he was asked by the Sisters why he had changed on that day the hour of his visit, he replied that he had intended to come at five, but that he was led, by some inexplicable impulse, to anticipate his usual visit by two hours. Thus an interior assurance, which it is known that Mother Mary of Providence had received, was remarkably fulfilled. She was always certain that her confessor would be with her in her last moments; and so it happened. Père Olivaint came, as she foretold he would, at three; and soon after he had heard her confession, and had departed, her final agony began, and before five, one of the Sisters, perceiving that she was very still, whispered: 'Our Mother is asleep.' But it was a sleep 'in the Lord,' for the foundress of the Helpers of the Holy Souls was no longer praying, suffering, and labouring amongst her children in this valley of tears; now, at length, the mystical invi-

tation had arrived for the true spouse of Jesus Christ : ' Arise, make haste, My beautiful one, and come ; for the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone.*'

In recording the circumstances of the last hours of Mother Mary of Providence, we cannot refrain from saying a few words more about Père Olivaint. The two were worthy of each other—if we may venture to pass any eulogy on a relationship so sacred—the confessor of the penitent, and the penitent of the confessor. As we read of the one exclaiming, when her blood was pouring forth from her wound in alarming quantities, ' O my God, how happy am I to shed my blood for Thee ; it is the will of God which is being accomplished,' we are reminded of an anecdote† related of Père Olivaint just before entering the Society of Jesus. To a friend who was deeply attached to him, and was showing some disposition to imitate his example, he said : ' Are you prepared to be broken on the wheel for the love of Jesus Christ ? ' ' No,' was the reply. ' Well, then, remain where you are, and do not come where I am going ; you have not the vocation.' Both had a sparkling pleasantry, that seemed to bubble suddenly up out of the most unfavourable circumstances : the one, when racked with pain, would ask for her ' chloroform,' her favourite name, as we have said, for the rosary of the Curé of Ars ; the other, when the insurrection had only just begun, foreseeing the probably fatal issue of the movement, observed one day with his cheerful vivacity : ' What, after all, is it for a Jesuit, who sacrifices his heart daily, to have to give up his head once ? ' and later on, when he was in the prison of La Roquette, he wrote thus : ' To give myself a little rest I have made

* Cant. ii. 11.

† This and the following anecdotes about P. Olivaint are narrated by P. de Ponlevoy in his *Actes de la Captivité et de la Mort de Cinq Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus*.

only *three* meditations to-day ;' and again : ' Ah, if I were a little bird, I would go to hear Mass somewhere every day, and then come back quite willingly to my cage.'

If the words, ' Thy will be done,' were perpetually on the lips of the Mother Superior at the Rue Barouillère, so ' Trust in God' was the favourite and ever-conclusive maxim of the Father Superior at the Rue de Sèvres ; and not long before his death he exclaimed, ' Our life is hung only upon a thread, but this thread is God Himself, and God alone supports it ; how happy I am to be within the hands of our Lord !'

By the mysterious providence of God their last moments were indeed widely different. The one had tasted something of the bitter cup of the miseries of her native land and adopted city, before she left it for a ' better country' and for that celestial city, ' whose builder and maker is God, the heavenly Jerusalem ;' but she had one precious consolation—her eyes were closed amidst the fervent prayers and tenderly affectionate attentions of her beloved religious, and she seemed to sleep rather than to expire, so tranquil was her passage into eternity. Père Olivaint, on the other hand, was swept into the welcome port of final rest as by a hurricane. On the 26th of May he left his prison-cell at La Roquette, only to be forcibly marched, on a night pitilessly inclement, amidst the sounds of ribald jests and execrations, to the nearest place in the neighbourhood of Belleville that seemed fitted for an extemporised massacre ; there he fell beneath the cruelly random shots of a recklessly fierce mob, and when dead—if indeed there was mercy enough in these savages to wait for the assurance of the fact—his riddled body was flung into an ignominious hole, indiscriminately with a heap of other corpses, victims, like himself, of the atheistic brutality and revenge which reddened Paris with flames and blood in that year of indescribable horrors—1871.

CHAPTER V.

THE HELPERS OF THE HOLY SOULS IN ENGLAND.

OUR great dramatist says, 'The evil that men do lives after them ; the good is oft interred with their bones.' If this be true in many cases, there is a sense in which we can affirm, on the other hand, that the good not only often lives after the original doers have gone to their reward, but puts forth new shoots, acquires fresh strength, and expands with an ever-growing progress. Such, we believe, is the destiny of the Order of the Holy Souls : its foundress is no more ; but her spirit, her organisation, her religious family go on ; she disappears from sight, but the tide of her wishes rolls forward over her saintly grave with a victorious advance.

During her life she had a strong desire to establish a house in England, but the project was not to be accomplished until she was unable to see its realisation with the eyes of her flesh. There was also another, a Prelate of sweet and holy memory, who was* preëminently devoted to the Holy Souls, and most anxious to coöperate with her in this work, and to welcome it to England. He also, like her, did not live to rejoice in the fulfilment of his wishes. 'Bishop Grant,' wrote Lady Georgiana Fullerton, on the 1st of December 1863, to the foundress, 'is deeply interested in your Order, and has spoken of it in his Pastoral of November ;' and on the 2d of February 1866, he himself addressed to the foundress an urgent letter, from which we extract the following passage : 'A Catholic lady has begged

* 'The Holy Souls were a living presence that he never lost sight of : in all his actions, his prayers, instructions, works of mercy, they were continually before him. He was never tired of adjuring his flock, children above all, to make devotion to them a practical part of their religion.' *Bishop Grant*, by Grace Ramsay, p. 208.

the undersigned Bishop to ask if it is possible for your religious to give us the hope of a house of your pious institution in that quarter of London which is comprised in the diocese of Southwark. . . . Ah, remember that thousands of churches have been closed in this island, that our monasteries have been demolished, that the Holy Souls in Purgatory have lost the large foundations—Masses, alms, and prayers—which existed in Catholic times. These Holy Souls need a perpetual reparation, radiating from London over the whole of England. When could you promise some Sisters? If you have to suffer here and amongst heretics, the Holy Souls will be glad and grateful.’ The foundress, in her reply on the 7th of the same month, said, amongst other things, ‘I have always thought that our Lord would some day call us to that land consecrated by the blood of so many martyrs, and I love to hope that our little Society will be enabled to establish itself in a country where heresy has not been afraid to attack the consoling doctrine of Purgatory; but, Monseigneur, is that hour yet come?’ For several reasons, which it is unnecessary to relate, she decided in the negative. The zealous Bishop, however, was not content with her arguments, pressed again his proposal, and with his well-known playfulness of retort ended his letter: ‘I must now tell you, that after having *prayed* as you have already done you must think about *acting*, because as for *suffering*, that is certain not to fail; difficulties we shall have, but to surmount them is an affair that belongs to the Holy Souls.’

The Bishop’s correspondent was, however, not to be dislodged from her resolution, either by the pertinacity of the appeal, or the ingenious strategy which adroitly turned the very motto of her own Order into a battery against her first and deliberately chosen position. She was quite ready with a counter-shot, and with expressions of much regret replied that, ‘after having both *prayed and suffered*,

she saw herself compelled to wait until Providence gave her the means to *act*.'

Happily the difficulties which prevailed at that time against the establishment of a house in England have ceased, and in the autumn of 1873, about two years and a half after the death of the foundress, the Order of the Helpers of the Holy Souls was installed, with the fervent approbation of Archbishop Manning, in the diocese of Westminster.

The present residence of the Community is at 23 Queen Anne-street, Cavendish-square, formerly numbered 48; and it will be interesting to those who can appreciate the associations which all true genius has the power of making historical, to be reminded that this is the house which was for nearly forty years—from 1812 to 1851—the residence of Joseph Mallord William Turner, 'the greatest landscape painter of the English School,' as he has been justly styled. He died under an assumed name in humble lodgings near the river-side at Chelsea, but it was in Queen Anne-street that he worked out on canvas most of the marvellously grand, though often eccentric, creations of his mind; and here also he kept with an exclusive privacy congenial to his singular humour a gallery of his paintings, and of the proofs, in thousands, of his engravings. The biographies of houses, as well as of individuals, present us not unfrequently with unexpected and strong contrasts. What the future of 23 Queen Anne-street will be it is impossible to predict; but amongst many other possible contingencies, who would have dreamed that Turner's house would have ever been chosen for the first home in England of the Helpers of the Holy Souls, and that the very room* from whose silent walls once issued works that have immortalised his name throughout the

* The former picture-gallery of Turner is the present chapel of the Holy Souls; and though he had another room for his usual

world of art would become a sanctuary, the august abode of the Adorable Sacrament, before Whose Presence, day and night, holy prayers, aspirations, and oblations of self-sacrifice are ever rising to plead for the refreshment and deliverance of the Souls in Purgatory?

The 27th of September 1873 will be a memorable day in the religious annals of this house, for on that day the first Mass was celebrated, and from that date began the regular work of the Community. Then it was that the harmonious machinery of religious life, and of practical charity towards the dead and the living, was set in movement; and surely a day that marked a new development in the growth of the Order, and added a new page to the history of the Catholic Church in England, was not without its festal recognition in that land of purification, where souls that have been united in the same Faith and Church, although their bodies were separated by wide intervals of geographical space, meet together as captives in one prison, but also glorying in one common bond of charity, obedience, and certain hope of the full vision of God. Surely if it be true that when one member suffers all suffer with it, and when one member rejoices all rejoice with it; and if, as we are told, the blessed angels in heaven exult over one repentant sinner upon earth,—it does not require much effort of faith to believe that, at the tidings of any new channel of merciful aid being opened by the living for the dead, a fresh gleam of refreshing light streams up through the bars of their prison, and the *De Profundis* here finds itself answered sweetly and gratefully by a *Te Deum* there.

As soon as ever the religious were settled in their abode, no delay was suffered to elapse before they com-

studio, it was his custom to bring his nearly finished works to the end of the gallery, and there give them the last touches of his brush. Vide *Life of Turner*, by Thornbury, vol. ii. p. 282.

menced their visitation of the sick poor. Since not one of the Sisters could speak a word of English, and the national character and whole domestic manners were different from those of France, it may be imagined that the undertaking required unusual courage, patience, and tact. But misery and true love understand each other well; they soon establish a sympathetic telegraphy which is a puzzle to the uninitiated, but which, nevertheless, succeeds. Bishop Grant said in one of his letters to Mother Mary of Providence, 'charity brings with it the gift of languages.' Probably, too, the very fact of being tenderly and assiduously cared for by foreign Sisters may impress many of the English poor with a more vivid personal sense of the deep and wide fellowship of the Catholic Church throughout the world than mere dogmatic teaching, without that experience, would have produced. The drawback, however, arising from a foreign tongue will gradually disappear, because the language of a strange country soon becomes familiar to those whose desire for knowledge is stimulated by zeal for souls, as the remarkable prosperity of the community in China abundantly proves. Nor will it be long, it is to be hoped, before a considerable English element, in the shape of choir-nuns and lay-sisters, will swell the ranks of the Order, and increase its efficiency in conversing with the sick.

The Octave of All Souls is always observed with great solemnity by the Order, and the first occasion of its being kept by the lately-arrived religious in this country was worthily marked by continuous services, in which his Grace the Archbishop of Westminster, and several distinguished clergy, both regular and secular, in the diocese took part.

The special devotions began on Sunday morning, the 2d of November, when the Archbishop offered up the Holy Sacrifice at 8.30. Every day, at three o'clock, sermons

followed by Benediction were addressed by the following preachers, to as large an audience as the chapel was capable of containing : the Right Rev. Monsignor Capel ; the Rev. Fr. Coleridge, S.J. ; Mons. l'Abbé Toursel (in French) ; the Rev. R. G. Macmullen (now Canon of Westminster) ; the Rev. Fr. Humphrey (Oblate of St. Charles) ; and the Rev. Fr. Stanislaus, Carmelite (in French). The concluding discourse was given on Sunday, the 9th, by his Grace the Archbishop ; and as a slight memento of the sermon, we quote the following short account taken from a Catholic journal : 'In eloquent language did his Grace describe the rapture of the souls when about to quit the expiatory state for heaven. "When weather-beaten seamen draw near their homes, they believe that they hear the bells chiming on the shore, and that the voices of those whom they love reach their listening ears ; when they smell the fragrance of that land which they are approaching, they have a sort of instinct that they are near home. Surely such also have the Holy Souls ; surely they have a consciousness that they are drawing nearer and nearer to the heavenly kingdom, that their homeward voyage is almost over ; and as this consciousness grows within them, how sweet must it be ! They can almost hear the alleluias of the heavenly court ; they can almost hear the greeting of their guardian angels ; they can almost believe that the welcome of the saints, and of those who were so beloved by them in this world, is thrilling in their ears. Surely, amidst all the pains of Purgatory, this must have imparted a certain sweetness and joy to the holy souls."

The rule of their daily observance is the same at each of the houses of the Order ; and as it may interest our readers to know the details, we give them from the admirable work of Père Blot, S.J., *Les Auxiliatrices du Purgatoire*, extracting them from the pages of an authoress whose name is a household word in our Catholic litera-

ture, and whose graphic and chastely eloquent pen seems never to pause in the activity of its devotion to the service of religion.* 'When they awake in the morning, they say, "My Jesus, mercy!" in order to begin the day by gaining an indulgence of one hundred days for the departed souls. They repeat this ejaculation every time they kneel or pass before the Blessed Sacrament, and often interiorly when they meet one another. They end all their prayers with the words, "Eternal rest grant them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them," and repeat them often at other times also. Whenever the clock strikes, they say, "My God, we offer Thee, for the relief of the souls in Purgatory, all the acts of love by which the Sacred Heart of Jesus glorified Thee at this hour whilst He was on earth." They say every day the "Office for the Dead," and after Mass sing the *De Profundis*. The prayer, "O good and very sweet Jesus," &c., is offered for the souls which have been particularly recommended to the Society, and then the "Litanies of Providence" are said for its spiritual and temporal necessities. At nine every evening, when the clock strikes, they recite the *De Profundis*.

There are two classes of religious, the choir-nuns and the lay-sisters, the latter being chiefly employed in the domestic work of the house. The novitiate lasts for two years; and, as a general rule, the novices visit the sick only when near the close of their probation, nor do they ever stay up all night with them, this onerous and delicate duty being restricted to professed and also experienced Sisters, and always under such conditions as prudence and necessity require. As we have said before, the Sisters, in addition to the usual three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, bind themselves to resign in favour

* *The Helpers of the Holy Souls*. Three Letters by Lady Georgiana Fullerton.

of the dead, so far as the will of God allows them, all the merits and satisfactions which they would otherwise gain for themselves, and all the suffrages and satisfactions which might be applied to them by others during their life, or after their death.

The especial exterior work of charity to which the Sisters devote themselves is, as we have stated, the gratuitous visitation of the sick poor at their own dwellings. It is not, however, so well known that they do not confine their services of mercy to Catholics alone. There is no rule whatever against their attending Protestants, although naturally, if there were a collision of applications, the Catholic would be considered to have the first claim, as belonging to the 'household of faith.'

The London house is in its infancy; but it is intended, when practicable, to carry out everything that the Order is fitted for to its full extent. No one can foresee how much it may be able to accomplish in the way of instructing the ignorant, consoling the sorrowful, and winning to the fold of the Catholic Church those who are as yet stumbling 'upon the dark mountains' of heresy and infidelity.

The records of the Order in France, Belgium, and China* teem with instances of the conversion of bad Ca-

* In China the '*visitandines*,' as they are called, effect many conversions from paganism. They are Chinese virgins, who, without taking the vows of the Order of the Helpers of the Holy Souls, endeavour, as far as possible, to keep the spirit of the rules. They have a novitiate of two years, during which time they live in the house of the Order, and receive a special educational training. They then go into various parts of the country, where they teach schools and prepare catechumens; and at the end of each year they return for a short time to one of the houses of the Order, for the purpose of renewing their religious associations and spirit, which would be otherwise liable to be injured by their living constantly amongst their unconverted fellow natives.

tholics, of sceptics, and of pagans, through the direct or indirect influence of the Sisters.

The prayers of the souls who are still suffering, and of those whose victorious passage within the jewelled gates of heaven has been rendered more speedy by means of their aid, have assuredly done for them 'great things;' but is there not another cause of success peculiar, in no small degree, to themselves? Can any one doubt that their incessant intercommunion with the dead by thought, prayer, and suffering, imparts to their character—unconsciously, it may be—that peculiar spirit of gentleness, patience, sympathy, and holy longing for the salvation of sinners which underlies even their ordinary conversation and manner, and which, acting like some hidden spiritual chemistry in their intercourse with the living, dissolves many an obstacle that seemed previously to be an almost insurmountable barrier to reconciliation with God and the Church of Christ?

Besides the visitation of the sick poor, which may be considered a fundamental part of the ordinary duties of the Sisters, they have commenced in Paris, since the death of the foundress, another work of great importance to the class for whose especial benefit it is intended—young girls, who are of sufficient age to earn their own living, but whose circumstances and unformed character naturally expose them to perils of every kind.

In Paris the following institution has been established by the Helpers of the Holy Souls. There is a school, at which girls are taught during the morning whatever it is useful for them to know in the industrial position which they have either already chosen or are likely to occupy. In the afternoon they all assemble to work at their respective trades; the beginners to learn, and those more advanced to labour for their own support. During these hours silence is kept, and they are under the supervision

of skilful and thoroughly trusty instructors. There is a daily recreation of three-quarters of an hour, and everything is done to promote innocent relaxation and enjoyment. The girls who pass through such a training, under the eyes of, and in frequent communication with, the Sisters, besides acquiring a strong sense of the religious duty of work, and a dread of the contagion of sin, gradually become fixed in regular and pious habits, are protected at a most critical period from many dangerous influences to which a more uncontrolled freedom or pressing necessity would expose them, and thus carry with them into their own homes an atmosphere of Catholic principles, feeling, and practice, which cannot be without a salutary and elevating effect upon others as well as on themselves.

The success of this work in Paris leads us to hope that it may be introduced in London. Every priest trembles at the thought of the ordeal through which so many girls have to pass when they leave, often abruptly, the comparatively 'still waters' of the school for that down-sucking vortex of the outer world in which, somehow or other, they must attempt at least to gain a livelihood. Flung as they frequently are at once into an iron circle of temptations, and of temporal as well as moral perplexities, without any one to advise them in their inexperience, or sustain their weakness by personal example, or cheer them on in their struggle for bread, is it a matter of surprise that so many of these souls are shipwrecked at the very threshold of womanhood? The evil in large cities is so universal, so constant, and so deeply rooted in the actual constitution of society; and the fierce daily battle of life, as it is called, deadens so effectually the conscience-nerves of spectators as well as combatants, that there is a tendency to leave the difficulty alone as utterly beyond remedy. But charity 'hopeth all things;' and even a 'cup of cold water' given to quench, however slightly, the great thirst of Jesus

Christ for the salvation of the souls of His redeemed, will not go without its reward. If we all stand apart from a large wound and 'pass on the other side,' because we cannot heal it completely, then we know little of Catholic common sense as well as of Catholic love. The Order of the Holy Souls aims at doing a little good, if it cannot do all; and therefore is not only willing but anxious to do its utmost to reproduce in London, with such modifications as may be necessary, the kind of religious and industrial institution for girls that has proved so great a boon in Paris. But for this object funds are needed, as the Order possesses no income of its own. It is one of those works of charity towards which—like that of the visitation of the sick, without restriction to creed—it is probable that even many Protestants would contribute, if they were appealed to on the broad merits of the case.

CHAPTER VI.

ASSOCIATED MEMBERS.

IN narrating the life of Mother Mary of Providence, we explained how, in the year 1857, the desire of extending the sphere of her Community, so that others might share in its aim, spirit, good works, and various privileges, without their absolutely becoming religious, developed into a third Order, under the name of LADY ASSOCIATES.

Their motto is the same as that of the Order, 'To pray, suffer, and labour' for the souls in Purgatory; and, to quote the words of Père Blot, 'they are bound to lead in the world a serious Christian life, by the constant practice of all the duties of religion, and by the greatest fidelity to all the duties of their state.' Although they are not under an obligation to make the 'heroic act,' and so offer up all their satisfactions and indulgences for the Holy Souls, like

the first twenty-eight who had the signal grace and privilege of being, so to say, the foundation-stones of the affiliated society, still the spirit of this act must manifest itself eminently in their motives, devotions, and general character of their whole life.

They are expected, according to their opportunities, to minister to the sick in coöperation with the religious, both by their personal attendance, and also by contributing in money, food, clothing, or in any other suitable way, to the wants of those who are entitled to claim their charity. As the Sisters themselves depend entirely upon others for their means of assisting the sick and poor, they naturally look to the Associates as their right hand in this work of mercy. For this reason it is obviously most desirable, that all who propose to become Associates should be able, directly or indirectly, to contribute to the resources of the Community, that a regular stream of alms may thus be kept flowing to the succour of the indigent, and so to the benefit of the suffering souls, and the glory of God. The Associates have a share, together with their deceased relatives, in the prayers and good works of the Order; can gain all the indulgences granted to it, and the other advantages that are derived from their affiliation to the Roman Archconfraternity of our Lady of Suffrage.

Candidates have, previous to their election, a brief probation of three months, and the members wear a cross (not necessarily conspicuous) which is almost identical with that of the Religious themselves. The following directions indicate sufficiently the general duties of the Associates, and further particulars will be given on application to the Mother Superior in London.

Rules for the Associates.

PRAYER.

1. On the second Monday in the month to assist in

behalf of their deceased relations at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered up in the chapel of the Helpers of the Holy Souls ; or if that is not possible, to hear it elsewhere for the same intention.

2. To recite every day the Vespers for the Dead.

3. To attend whenever they can the Masses celebrated in the said chapel for deceased members of the Association, notice of which will be given to all the Associates, and to offer up a Communion and a third part of the Rosary for the same intention.

SUFFERINGS.

4. To bear the sorrows and daily trials of life in a spirit of penance, and in behalf of the souls in Purgatory, and according to the measure of their devotion to make over to them the indulgences they may gain when they are applicable to the dead.

GOOD WORKS.

5. To visit or relieve the sick poor.

6. To contribute to the gratuitous good works of the Society by an annual offering on the day, or during the octave, of All Souls. The amount of the alms is optional.

7. On Mondays,* as the day especially consecrated by the Church to the memory of the Faithful departed, to attend the meetings held for work for the poor at the house of the Helpers of the Holy Souls ; and if they are *unavoidably* prevented from doing so, to make up for it by some work of the same kind at home, which can be forwarded to the Community.

Infirm and sick persons who cannot perform some of the above-mentioned works of mercy can easily have others substituted in their stead.

* There are already between thirty and forty ladies who meet at Queen Anne-street for this admirable purpose.

In that generous and ever-extending army which the Helpers of the Holy Souls are unceasingly gathering together, the Lady-Associates deservedly hold the foremost rank, being, above all others, the most closely linked with them by the assimilation of their rules, and their personal coöperation with the Sisters.

As, however, the object of this Order is not only to labour themselves for the Holy Souls, but also to diffuse, as widely as possible, their own spirit and example, another kind of membership has been instituted, which embraces both sexes, and in which the duties are far less onerous than those of the Lady-Associates.

This class is called the HONORARY MEMBERS. Their obligations are as follows: they have to repeat every day the Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity, together with the ejaculation, 'My Jesus, mercy!' Equally with the Lady-Associates they share, together with their deceased relatives, in the prayers and good works of the Order, and also in the Masses of the associated Priests, and in the Communion of associated Religious during life and after death. Besides the prayers above mentioned, the only other obligation is the payment of a yearly subscription of not less than five shillings; any larger sum is voluntary, and is left to the generosity of the giver. In France many Honorary Members contribute twenty francs annually.

Priests can become Honorary Members by promising to offer up the Holy Sacrifice once a month for all living and deceased members, and Religious, by offering up a monthly Communion for the same object. A great number of Religious societies have taken advantage of this privilege and enrolled themselves.

Those persons who are not always able to contribute even so much as five shillings annually, but are anxious to join in this great work of charity, can become affiliated by giving any small alms according to their means,

and by reciting the same prayers as the Honorary Members.

Those who give their offerings, however little, annually, can gain the same indulgences as the Honorary Members, and will participate in the good works of the Society proportionately to the amount of their subscription.

In the case of those who are unable to give any alms whatever, they will, on the condition of reciting daily the usual prayers, be admitted to a fellowship in all the prayers of the Society, but not in its good works, because they do not coöperate with it in this respect.

As some prefer to contribute a fixed sum once for all, another class, called **BENEFACTORS**, has been established to meet this desire. In order to become a Benefactor, the *lowest* sum required is ten pounds. Those Benefactors who recite also daily the usual prayers will obtain all the same advantages as the Honorary Members, without being called on to pay any further amount, annual or otherwise. The names of all Benefactors are inscribed in a book specially kept for that purpose. The beneficial participation, it will be remembered, of the various prayers and good works of the Society extends to deceased relatives and is continued to the members themselves when they are numbered with the departed. What the amount of this precious boon is none but God can tell, but we can approach to some idea of its value if we consider that the number of the Religious alone in the Order is at present 150, with accessions coming in; and that in the year 1872, when the last calculation was made, no less than 180,000 Communions, besides 4800 Masses, said by associated Priests, were received into the spiritual treasury of the Order. Since 1872 the number of all classes of members has been considerably augmented.

The occasions upon which a Plenary Indulgence can be gained are as follows: **THE DAY OF ENROLMENT; ALL**

SOULS, NOV. 2; FEAST OF ST. GERTRUDE, NOV. 25; ST. JOSEPH, MARCH 19; ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, JULY 31; THE ANNUNCIATION, MARCH 25; THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART, FIRST FRIDAY AFTER CORPUS CHRISTI; also at THE HOUR OF DEATH, by ejaculating with a contrite heart, mentally at least, 'My Jesus, mercy!'

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.

WE have now arrived at the limit which we have assigned to ourselves in bringing before our readers the above account of the life of Mother Mary of Providence, of the gradual development of the Order which she founded, of its object and constitution, and, lastly, of its introduction into England.

It is only about five years ago that the following earnest and touching words were written in the concluding pages of Lady Georgiana Fullerton's *Three Letters*: 'It now only remains for us to *hope* that at no distant day the Helpers of the Holy Souls may come to England, and establish amongst us a sanctuary of perpetual prayer for our departed ones, and carry on amidst our poor a course of devoted labour daily offered up for the same intention.' That hope has been, as we know, realised. We do not contemplate the Order at a distance, it is in the very midst of us; we have no longer to regard with a pious envy the Catholics of France, or Belgium, or China; for we can now actually hear its suppliant yet cheering voice; we can behold, so to say, its sweetly-solemn features, and its devotedly-energetic action, in the persons of its religious, who have but two homes—the foot of the altar and the bed of the sick and dying. It now only remains for us

to offer up our most grateful thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to His Blessed Mother, the Queen of Purgatory, for having added to countless other mercies this gift to us and to our native land of an Order whose chief mission is to gladden the Hearts of Jesus and Mary by aiding them to receive exiled souls into their eternal home more speedily than would otherwise have been possible if no hands had been raised upon earth to lessen the heavy, though strictly merited, pressure of divine justice in the world unseen.

That we ought to greet with an especial welcome the presence amongst us of the Helpers of the Holy Souls, for the sake of the incalculable benefits of which they will be constant channels to the dead in general, is almost too obvious to require any argument or observation. With ordinary Catholics, whose sphere is in the world, the thought of, and attention to, the needs of the suffering souls is necessarily liable to the perils of remission, desultoriness, and tepidity. Time is so short, business and pleasure are so absorbing and clamorous, self is so constantly before its own glass, and the visible present, whether by its attractions or its pains, is such a large intervening curtain, that Purgatory comes before most minds only in very imperfect and irregular glimpses. Nay, how many are there on whose conscious life it has no more influence than some distant hazy form of cloud has upon the mariner who is busy sounding the depths close beneath him, or whose eyes are keenly watching for some definite landmark towards which he is steering. There are those even who, except on certain occasions, such as All Souls'-day, or the anniversary of a relative, or when attending a funeral-procession to a cemetery, are not inclined to turn their thoughts towards Purgatory; it is to them a depressing topic, and their maxim is to avoid as much as they can the shadow which it casts upon their gaiety of thought.

If, then, we want the reverse of this picture—if we want the most perfect protection against the above-mentioned defects and perils, and the most fruitful organisation for carrying out what Catholic faith teaches about our duties towards the departed, and what Catholic charity yearns to accomplish, we have only to point to the Helpers of the Holy Souls, whose very identity is so woven by their hourly thoughts, actions, and sufferings, with the cause of the dead, that after having voluntarily stripped themselves of their former pursuits, associations, and name in the world, they may be figuratively said to ‘live, move, and have their being’ in Purgatory. This is indeed the true though invisible prison, hospital, and orphanage of their predilection, where they visit in spirit, and by their works of satisfaction refresh, Jesus Christ Himself ever mystically present and suffering in the persons of His redeemed, who are waiting meekly for the hour to sound of their complete liberation. Who can form any approximate idea of what a society can do which would have no reason for existing in the Church, no meaning, no object, if Purgatory itself had no reality, and where that force which springs from the unity of the whole body—where the consecration by vows, the sanctification of individuals, and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy practised by them, are all lines which harmoniously and powerfully converge to one centre—the holy rest and happiness of our beloved dead?

We welcome the Helpers of the Holy Souls, not only for the good which they will confer directly upon the dead by their own personal piety and self-sacrifice, but also for the precious influence which they cannot fail to exercise upon all who are in any way associated with them. You cannot approach fire without experiencing an additional warmth; you cannot touch, however lightly, a wire which is in communication with electric force, without some portion of the current vibrating through your frame; if you

are within the onward sweep of a tide, your movement must accelerate. So in like manner whoever unites himself with the objects and living machinery of the Helpers will, according to the degree and earnestness of his fellowship, find his mind, his affections, his views of things, his devotion, and his duties gradually assuming an unmistakable tinge from the spirit of the Order. The fragrance of its charity towards the departed will wind its way into the various inner folds of the social and moral, as well as the spiritual, life of all its affiliated members.

An Order devoted to one special aim concentrates light and heat to a marvellous extent upon its own central point, and upon everything that radiates from it, just as a great conflagration draws attention to itself from all quarters, and sky, earth, water, and men's forms and features stand out more or less distinctly in the suffused glow, so that all within reach see and feel its presence. Hence it is that the Order of the Helpers is so valuable even to the living. It brings before them with unusual prominence the tremendous revelation of Purgatory; by its perpetual prayers and labours, it teaches in a striking manner both the rigorouslyness of that Divine justice, which cannot be modified except by 'a strong cry' and by vicarious expiation, and also the certainty and abundance of that mercy which welcomes every effort made upon earth for the suffering souls as a gift to Jesus Christ Himself; it turns men's thoughts with a new force upon the infinite value of the Mass, upon the wide practical meaning of the fellowship of the Saints, upon the power of the Church with regard to indulgences, and, in short, upon the whole circle of the many doctrines that are connected with the state of the soul after death.

The influence of the Order, therefore, upon the minds of its external members, even so far only as it tends by its very nature and presence amongst them to awaken

their attention and to deepen their faith in certain parts of God's revelation, is of great value.

What it does for faith it also effects for charity. Not only is it a living vial ever full of prayers for the relief of the dead—a living thurible, which the hand of piety replenishes day and night with the heaven-ascending incense of voluntary suffering as well as of entreaty, but it is a living magnet, ever drawing the steps of others into its own path towards the same merciful object. Like the man of Macedonia, who appeared to St. Paul in a vision standing and beseeching him, and saying to him, 'Pass over into Macedonia and help us,' this admirable Order is perpetually standing and beseeching and saying to all Catholics, 'Pass over into *our* Macedonia'—the region, namely, of 'prayer, labour, and suffering' for the departed—'and help us.'

Zeal is always magnetic, but that zeal is preëminently so which is self-evidently disinterested—which is additionally vitalised by a pure sense of duty, and strongly secured by the consecration of vows, and which, being free from the disturbing fluctuations and frequent drag-weights of merely individual will, works daily and during every hour within the well-organised grooves of a religious community. In the description given by the prophet Ezekiel of his vision of the cherubim and their accompanying wheels it is said, 'The spirit of life was in the wheels;' and similarly we may declare of the Order of the Helpers that their spirit of zeal for the suffering souls is 'in its wheels'—in the wheels of its rules, in the wheels of the united action of its members, and in the wheels of its progress; for as it advances through the Catholic world, this spirit keeps pace with its own multiplication. The 'appearance and work of the wheels' in the vision 'was as it were a wheel within a wheel;' and this illustrates what we are desirous of pointing out, namely, how much

the Order effects, by stimulating in all its associated members, who are the 'wheels *within* the wheels,' a fruitful love for the dead; also by so systematising towards the same end yearnings which would otherwise be desultory, that no devotional force may be needlessly wasted; and by presenting a regular and lofty example of charity, which will serve at least as a standard to be kept in view, even if unattainable, by those who live in the world.

The Last Day alone will reveal the vastness of the number of Catholics who, by the grace of God, will have been indebted chiefly to their connection with the Order either for a resurrection out of a deep slothfulness, or for a more intense and steady zeal in regard to the dead, or for promptitude and generosity in offering the only reparation possible to those who passed into the other world before the spiritual wounds inflicted upon them by those who, perhaps, called themselves dear friends, had been healed.

Who, when he reflects upon what the Helpers of the Holy Souls are incessantly doing for those dead with whom they have no tie of kinship, can fail often to examine what is his own conduct, not only towards the dead in general, but towards those who have every possible claim upon his prayers? Will not the mere sight of one of the Helpers sting many a tepid oblivious father or mother, husband or wife, parent or child, friend or enemy, with compunction and shame at their own neglect?

How many are there also who are ready to bestow a certain kind of sentimental emotion on the recalled memory of some whom they once loved, who keep their little mementoes with fidelity, who read their handwriting again and again, and look at their portraits, and yet will take scarcely any trouble to have a Mass celebrated, or to offer an alms to the poor, or to apply an indulgence, in their behalf! This is indeed 'giving a stone' to the departed

instead of 'bread.' If only a thousandth part of the time, feeling, and conversation that is often spent in sterile regrets for those who are no more, were to be employed in 'praying, suffering, labouring' for them, there would be, perhaps, less merely human tears shed upon the earth, but the fiery path of Purgatory would be shorter, and the 'crown' and 'robe of glory' would be more speedily placed upon those souls to whom the affection of persons once dear to them in a cherished past can only be truly welcome when it distils itself in labour for them during the crisis of their present need.

Prayers, sufferings, and labours for the dead are *immortelles* which do not stay to wither on the surface of the grave, but, being transmuted by the Sacred Heart of Jesus into rest, light, and liberty, reach in this blessed form the souls of the dead. Let us pray that we may never be classed with those whom St. Bernard describes as producing 'much weeping but no fruit, and who are more to be pitied themselves than the dead whose loss they mourn.'

We therefore welcome the introduction of the Order of the Helpers amongst us, not only on account of the inestimable boon which its Religious will confer, by their own personal services, upon the dead, but also because it will foster towards them, in the hearts of its various Associates, a spirit of devotion fervent, solid, practical, and regular.

Who can tell what indirect influence it may have even upon those who are outside the Catholic Church? The knowledge of the fact that in the centre of a busy heartless Babylon an Order exists which serves with equally ardent charity the suffering who are yet alive, and the dead who are beyond the reach of human sight, touch, or sound, can scarcely fail to attract the serious attention of many who would otherwise treat the whole question of the state of the departed as one too dark for even an

approach to a probable conjecture. Catholic dogma, as experience proves, when presented in the shape of a dry theological formula, or used as a polemical weapon by a violent controversialist, will often fail to move those who are, on the other hand, disarmed and even converted if it comes before their eyes glowing with the fire and beauty of that heroic charity which its truth has kindled in the hearts of the Faithful.

Lastly, we welcome the Order with more than ordinary greeting, because it has come to our own land to endeavour in some degree to repair the shattered ruins of the past, and to build up again that temple of devotion to the dead which was in olden days so large and glorious in England. In the eloquent words of a recent writer,* 'Heresy has put out the lamps of our sanctuaries and muffled the chimes of our belfries; pious foundations, where for centuries the Holy Sacrifice went up daily for the dead, have been abolished; once all the land was a great fountain whence the torrent of the Precious Blood was for ever flowing in great waves towards that shore of blessedness and pain on the other side of heaven, but now it trickles thither in thin streams from altars few and far between.'

This, alas, is true, but it is also undeniable that a great change has passed over England within recent years; the precious current is swelling and moving in the old direction, and amongst the channels through which it will abundantly pass to the succour of the long and much-neglected dead, not the least wide and deep will be the Order of the Helpers of the Holy Souls.

We will conclude with a fervent aspiration, which we cannot believe will be disappointed. We hope that not only will the Associates of every degree rapidly increase and generously aid in supporting the Order, but that many elect souls will recognise in its voice, now so loud and

* Grace Ramsay, *Life of Bishop Grant*.

near, not only an efficacious pleading for mercy to the dead, but a still more tender, loving, and supernatural call from the Divine Bridegroom Himself, inviting them to 'forsake all things and follow Him' into the inner fold of the Order itself, *there* to devote themselves to its work of love, with the singleness of aim, intensity of energy, unceasing spirit of martyrdom, and manifold fruitfulness of works, which are the characteristics and glory of all true spouses of Jesus Christ.

Nearly eleven years have elapsed since Father Faber, when on his sick-bed, eulogised this Order as a powerful means for 'promoting the glory of God,' and Bishop Grant yearned, prayed, and laboured for its introduction into his diocese, that by this means 'a perpetual reparation might radiate from London over the whole of England.' Thanks be to God, that apostolate of mercy which, ever standing, as it were, by the side of two worlds, 'pours oil and wine' into the wounds of the suffering ones of both, has now planted its banner amongst us upon our own shores!

Is it, then, too bold to predict that the time is not far distant when the appeal thus clearly, earnestly, and confidently made will meet with a generous response, and that many of the Catholic daughters of England, following the noble example of those of other lands, will joyfully forego all the attractions of the world, and consecrate themselves for ever to a life of

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